United Nations ST/AI/2010/8

Secretariat

1 June 2010

Administrative instruction

Conditions under which individuals may take national competitive recruitment examinations

The Under-Secretary-General for Management, pursuant to section 4.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2009/4, and for the purpose of defining the conditions under which individuals may take national competitive recruitment examinations, promulgates the following:

Section 1
General provisions

National competitive recruitment examinations are held annually in particular occupational groups for recruitment at the P-1 and P-2 level and occasionally at the P-3 level, in accordance with the needs of the Organization. Specific arrangements for such examinations shall be announced internally through information circulars and externally through a notice, which shall be issued at least three months in advance of the upcoming examinations. Competitive examinations for recruitment and placement in posts requiring specific language skills in the Professional category are not governed by the present instruction.

Section 2
Identification of occupational groups and invited Member States

2.1 The Office of Human Resources Management, taking into account the data on the geographical representation of Member States and the projected retirements in the upcoming years, will conduct a workforce planning exercise in order to identify the Member States that should be the target for the examinations and to establish the occupational groups at the Professional level (P-1, P-2 and occasionally P-3) for which examinations will be needed, and the projected vacancies in those groups.

2.2 All unrepresented and underrepresented Member States will be invited. A small number of Member States within range or below midpoint and which are in danger of becoming unrepresented or underrepresented, may also be invited.

2.3 Invited Member States will be given a specified period of time to respond to the invitation and those which reply positively will participate in the programme.

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2.4 After completion of the examinations, the Office of Human Resources Management will report to participating Member States the results of the examination for their nationals.

Section 3
Eligibility

3.1 National competitive recruitment examinations are open to any individual who:

(a) Is a national of one of the Member States for which an examination at the appropriate level and occupational group is administered in a particular year. Staff members who have been legally accorded nationality status by more than one State shall be considered nationals of the Member State which has been recognized by the Secretary-General as their United Nations nationality pursuant to staff rule 4.3;

(b) Is not more than 32 years old on 31 December of the year of the P-1/P-2 examination and not more than 39 years old on 31 December of the year of the P-3 examination;

(c) Is fluent in either English or French;

(d) Meets the minimum educational and experience criteria set out in section 3.2 of the present instruction.

3.2 The minimum educational criteria for each level are as follows:

(a) For the P-1 and P-2 levels, the minimum educational criterion is at least a three-year first-level university degree conferred on the applicant, directly relevant to the occupational group for which the applicant has applied in a given year. An associate degree or equivalent will not be considered as meeting the requirements under the present section;

(b) For the P-3 level, the minimum educational criterion is an advanced university degree directly relevant to one of the occupations in which the examination is offered. In addition, a minimum of four years of relevant experience in a field directly relevant to the occupation is required.

Examples of acceptable university degrees for specific occupational groups will be provided in the information circular and notice announcing the upcoming examinations.

3.3 Notwithstanding the age limits set out in section 3.1(b), a staff member serving in the General Service and related categories may take the national competitive recruitment examination at any age, as long as he or she meets all of the criteria set out in sections 3.1 and 3.2, as well as the following:

(a) Holds a United Nations appointment valid until at least six months after the date when the written examination is scheduled to take place;

(b) Has a rating of at least "fully meets performance expectations" or "fully successful performance" in his or her last two performance assessments.

3.4 Every application shall be subject to review by the United Nations Central Recruitment Examinations Board to determine whether it meets the conditions set out in the present instruction. Applicants may be asked to provide relevant

documents, as required, as evidence in support of their meeting the eligibility requirements described in the present section.

Section 4
Applications

Individuals who wish to submit an application shall complete the appropriate application form annexed to the information circular or notice announcing the upcoming examinations and submit it with all required documentation to the Examinations and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management by the deadline indicated in the information circular or notice.

Section 5
Review of applications by the Central Recruitment Examination Board

5.1 In instances where the number of applications received from individuals of the same nationality in a given occupational group exceeds the operational capacity, the Central Recruitment Examination Board shall review all timely applications and decide on the most qualified applicants who will be invited to take the national competitive recruitment examination. For that purpose, the Board shall review the qualifications of applicants that exceed the minimum entrance criteria listed in sections 3.1 and 3.2. These qualifications include, but are not limited to, advanced university degrees, diplomas or certificates; knowledge of additional official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish); a broader spectrum of work experience; and any publications.

5.2 All applicants shall receive notification regarding the outcome of their application to take the national competitive recruitment examination.

Section 6
Format and substance of the examination

6.1 The examination will take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of the United Nations.

6.2 For the P-1 and P-2 levels, the examination comprises:

(a) *Written examination (80 per cent of the marks).* The written examination consists of (i) a specialized paper which tests the substantive knowledge of the particular occupation for which the examinee is being tested and (ii) a general paper which tests drafting skills;

(b) *Oral examination (20 per cent of the marks).* The oral examination will consist of an interview with the examinee, who will be asked questions designed to ascertain whether he or she possesses the United Nations core values and competencies necessary for positions in the relevant occupational group or groups and to test his or her general knowledge of international affairs.

6.3 For the P-3 level, the examination comprises:

(a) *Written examination (40 per cent of the marks).* The written examination consists of (i) a specialized paper which tests the substantive knowledge of the particular occupation for which the examinee is being tested and (ii) a general paper, which tests drafting skills;

(b) *Case presentation (40 per cent of the marks).* Examinees are given a problem or a situation relevant to the specialization within the occupational group and are asked to make a written and an oral presentation to the Board of Examiners on their recommendation;

(c) *Oral examination (20 per cent of the marks).* The oral examination will consist of an interview with the examinee, who will be asked questions designed to ascertain whether he or she possesses the United Nations core values and competencies necessary for positions in the relevant occupational group or groups and to test his or her general knowledge of international affairs.

6.4 All written and oral examinations will normally follow a similar format in all occupational groups. In cases of high numbers of examinees sitting for the examination in a given occupational group, only examinees who score high enough in the section of the examination that carries the highest percentage of points in the specialized paper (usually the essays) will have the entire specialized paper marked.

6.5 The written examination for all occupational groups will be administered simultaneously in different locations and United Nations duty stations throughout the world. Eligible applicants will be informed in writing of the exact date, time and location of the written examination.

6.6 On the basis of performance in the written examination, the Board of Examiners will invite selected P-1/P-2 examinees to the oral examination and selected P-3 examinees to the case presentation and oral examination.

6.7 Additional information on the format of the examination will be included in the information circular or notice announcing the upcoming examinations. Sample questions, as well as lists of topics that may be helpful in preparing for the examination, will be made available at all duty stations by means of the United Nations Intranet and externally on the Internet.

Language of the examination

6.8 In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 35/210 of 17 December 1980 and 37/235 D of 21 December 1982, the examination can be taken in any of the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), with due regard to the requisite proficiency in one of the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. Consequently, the general paper of the written examination should be taken in either English or French and the specialized paper can be taken in any of the United Nations official languages. The oral examination must be taken in either English or French.

Section 7
Central Recruitment Examination Board

7.1 The Central Recruitment Examination Board is composed of five members appointed by the Secretary-General: a chair and a minimum of four members belonging to different departments of the Organization. The Central Recruitment Examination Board will have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and a secretary. There will be as many alternate positions as there are Board members.

7.2 The Central Recruitment Examination Board has the following responsibilities:

(a) To oversee the examination procedures and arrangements;

(b) To screen all applications and determine the eligibility of applicants to sit the examination;

(c) To review and decide upon recommendations made by the boards of examiners, especially on the arrangements for the marking of papers; recommendations on which examinees are to be convoked to the case presentation (for P-3) and oral examination, based on the results of the written examination; and recommendations on the minimum professional standards required for inclusion in the roster, and to establish the final ranking of candidates;

(d) To recommend to the Secretary-General possible improvements for future examinations.

Section 8
Specialized boards of examiners

8.1 Specialized boards of examiners will be appointed by the Secretary-General and will normally be composed of staff members of the United Nations Secretariat; however, staff members of the specialized agencies, consultants, outside experts or retirees may also be included if deemed necessary. Each specialized board of examiners will consist of a chair elected by the members of the board, and a number of members nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management at least four months prior to the written examination. Each specialized board of examiners will have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management.

8.2. Staff members serving on the specialized boards of examiners will be released by departments on a full-time basis to serve on the boards for a period sufficient to complete the marking of the examination. This assignment will be part of their workplan and be recognized in their performance evaluation.

8.3 Under the overall responsibility of the Central Recruitment Examination Board, specialized boards of examiners have the following responsibilities:

(a) To contribute to the preparation of the written examination;

(b) To mark the written examination. A board of examiners will be established to mark the specialized paper of the written examination, and another board of examiners will be established to mark the general paper of the written examination;

(c) To report to the Central Recruitment Examination Board the results of the written examination;

(d) To recommend to the Central Recruitment Examination Board the minimum standard required in all parts of the examination;

(e) To recommend to the Central Recruitment Examination Board a list of examinees (who are not identified by name), in ranking order, to be convoked to the case presentation (when applicable) and oral examination for each occupational group, based on the results of the written examination;

(f) To conduct and mark the case presentation and/or oral examination;

(g) To recommend to the Central Recruitment Examination Board the final ranking of examinees (who are not identified by name) in order of merit by occupational group, based on the total of the combined results of the written examination, case presentation and/or oral examination.

Section 9
Marking examinations and rostering of successful examinees

9.1 Based on the results of the written examination, the specialized boards of examiners will recommend to the Central Recruitment Examination Board the list of examinees who should be called for the oral examination and case presentations (for the P-3 level). The Central Recruitment Examination Board will make the final recommendation with regard to the number of examinees that should be invited to the oral examination and the case presentation when applicable.

9.2 The Examinations and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management will, upon receipt of the recommendation of the Central Recruitment Examination Board, communicate in writing to all examinees the outcome of their performance in the written examination and invite the examinees approved by the Central Recruitment Examination Board to the oral examination and case presentation.

9.3 The specialized boards of examiners will conduct and evaluate the oral examinations and oral presentations. The examinees for each occupational group will be ranked on the basis of their combined scores in all parts of the examination. Taking into account the level of difficulty of the examination, the specialized boards of examiners will make recommendations to the Central Recruitment Examination Board on the passing thresholds in order to determine which examinees could be considered for inclusion in the roster. The recommendations concerning the qualification of examinees to perform at the junior Professional level and the final decision will be made confidentially, with full respect for anonymity.

9.4 The Central Recruitment Examination Board will make the final recommendations to the Secretary-General with regard to the number of examinees that should be included in the roster.

9.5 Once approved, the Examinations and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management will inform the examinees of the final recommendations and will transfer the files of the successful candidates to the Staffing Service for selection against current or future vacancies.

9.6 Upon receipt of a second rejection of a formal offer, the name of the successful candidate will be removed from the roster.

9.7 Successful candidates who are selected for a post will normally be expected to serve at least two years in their new post.

9.8 Pursuant to staff rule 4.3, for the purposes of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations and Staff Rules, the nationality of a successful candidate shall be the nationality of the State under which he or she applied to the national competitive examination. A successful candidate with multiple nationalities shall normally not be allowed to change his or her nationality for the purposes of the Staff Regulations and Rules during his or her career.

9.9 Successful candidates recruited at the P-1, P-2 or P-3 levels will serve at any of the United Nations Secretariat duty stations worldwide.

Section 10
Final provisions

10.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.

10.2 Administrative instruction ST/AI/1997/1, entitled "Conditions under which staff members may take national competitive recruitment examinations", is hereby abolished.

(*Signed*) Angela **Kane**
Under-Secretary-General for Management